



F-35 Lightning II Program

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AIR FORCE ISSUES FLIGHT RELEASE FOR EGLIN AFB F-35A

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio - Officials at the Aeronautical Systems Center here issued a Military Flight Release today that will allow the F-35A Lightning II fighter to begin initial operations at Eglin AFB, Fla.

This decision was reached after an airworthiness board conducted an assessment that evaluated potential risks and the corresponding mitigation actions to conduct unmonitored flights. Flying the Air Force variant of the Joint Strike Fighter will increase pilot and maintainer familiarity with the aircraft, exercise the logistics infrastructure and continue to develop aircraft maturity. These initial F-35A flights will be limited, scripted, conducted within the restrictions and stipulations of the MFR and flown by qualified pilots, officials said.

"The Air Force, Joint Strike Fighter Program Office and other stakeholders have painstakingly followed established risk acceptance and mitigation processes to ensure the F-35A is ready. This is an important step for the F-35A and we are confident the team has diligently balanced the scope of initial operations with system maturity," said General Donald Hoffman, commander of Air Force Materiel Command, the parent organization of ASC.

The assessment was conducted with airworthiness engineering subject matter experts within ASC and was fully coordinated with the F-35 joint Strike Fighter Program Office, Air Education and Training Command, and other expert participants. The Air Force is confident the aircraft is ready to fly in a safe and efficient manner, Hoffman said.